

**Remarks: Vital Voices Reception, Monday, February 27, 2012, 18:00**

Good evening, everyone. Elaine and I are delighted to have the chance to host all of you in our home. I know that many of you were here a little over a year ago, for the launch of the Vital Voices mentoring program here in Poland. Or, perhaps you wanted to be here, but were caught in the terrible snowstorm we had that evening. In any case, I'm glad you were able to make it here this evening!

For those of you who are unfamiliar, Vital Voices Global Partnership is a bipartisan NGO established in 1997 by my former boss – former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright – and my current boss – then-First Lady and current Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Over those 15 years, more than 10,000 emerging women leaders from over 127 countries have been trained and mentored in the U.S. – and those women in turn have returned home to train and mentor more than half a million additional women in their communities.

It comes as no surprise to me that the first edition of the Polish Chapter of Vital Voices in 2010 was such a success that it is being repeated for a second time this year. I have heard several stories of mentees who – after their experience with the program – gained the confidence and skills necessary to get a sought-after promotion at work or to transition to another company or career.

In fact, in just a few moments, you will hear from one of these 2010 mentees about her experience with the mentorship program. I have no doubt that this year's mentees will be just as successful.

This success is due in large part to the tremendous support of Jolanta Kwasniewska, who has been involved in the program since its early days and serves as a mentor through the program.

I also want to recognize the months of hard work put in by the president of the Polish Chapter of Vital Voices, Agnieszka Bilinska, and co-founder Daria Tataj. Their ability not only to organize such a complex program but to match mentors and mentees in a thoughtful way is equally a key to the clear success of this program.

## **State Department Support of Women**

Since the time that Hillary Clinton became Secretary of State the State Department has made empowerment of women worldwide a key priority. The Office of Global Women's Issues was established as part of the State Department in 2009 in recognition of the need to support the political, economic, and social empowerment of women as a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy.

One of the ways in which the State Department supports women is through various mentoring programs aimed at providing support to women in all career areas, including business, politics, civil society and science and technology.

*Secretary Clinton quotes in support of mentoring and in support of women generally include:*

- “I am a firm believer in the power of mentoring. There are women and girls in our country and around the world who have the talent, the intellect, the drive to succeed, but who lack the support. I have become convinced that talent is universal, but opportunity is not.
- And you never know when what you do or say can open that door to opportunity for someone who is ready to walk through it, but could not get under, around, or over it without your help. And still in too many places, support for women is in short supply. But through mentoring, we can help meet that need. And it’s low-cost, high-impact, and deeply rewarding.” (Remarks at 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Fortune Most Powerful Women Summit, October 6, 2010)

- “No society can achieve its full potential when half the population is denied the opportunity to achieve theirs.”  
(Remarks at UNESCO Global Partnership for Girls’ and Women’s Education, May 26, 2011)

## **Introduction of Susan Whiting**

One of the most successful mentoring programs supported by the State Department is a joint effort of *Fortune Magazine* and the State Department that connects talented, emerging women leaders from all over the world with members of *Fortune's* Most Powerful Women Leaders for a month-long internship program. It is this program on which the Polish Chapter of Vital Voices is modeled.

This evening I have the privilege of recognizing one of these powerful women leaders who has served as a mentor to women from around the world – including from here in Poland. Susan Whiting, Vice Chair at Nielsen – a global information and measurement company – has come to Poland this week to share her experience with the mentors and mentees. I know that her involvement will help make the program even more successful.

## **Thanks to Mentors**

Finally, I want to acknowledge the critical role played by the Vital Voices mentors. You donate a lot of your free time – of which you don't have much to begin with! – to support and encourage your mentees.

Further, your constructive feedback will help the program grow and improve, particularly as the mentorship program expands to include mentees who are in careers other than business as well as mentees who are from neighboring countries that are at an earlier stage of economic transition than Poland. Without your efforts, Vital Voices would not exist.



So, again, thank you all for coming this evening and for your varied efforts to support Polish women. Thanks to those who are already serving as mentors, and to those of you who are not, I hope that you consider becoming one in a future edition of the Vital Voices mentoring program.

[Note: Mrs. Kwasniewska will speak next.]